



The Date of the Auspicious Birth; *the 12th Rabi' al-Awwal discussion*

From *Diya' al-Nabi* by *Diya' al-Ummat*, Justice Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah al-Azhari (ra)
Translated July 2006

There is no dispute over the fact that the day of the birth of the Benefactor of Mankind (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was a Monday.

There is also nearly an agreement between the scholars of the Islamic community (*umma*) that it was the blessed month of Rabi' al-Awwal. The opinions relating to the month of Ramadan and the month of Muharram are not even worthy of attention according to the people of knowledge and research. However, concerning the exact date of Rabi' al-Awwal when the Sun of Guidance manifested itself and enlightened the darkened world, numerous views have been related from the respected scholars. At this point, we will present to the readers the opinions of the scholars of research and by studying them they will be able to extract the correct result with ease.

1. Imam Ibn Jarir Tabari – who was a matchless commentator of the Qur'an and a mature and careful historian – concerning this topic writes;

“The noble Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was born on Monday, the twelfth of Rabi' al-Awwal during the year of the elephant.”¹

2. 'Allama Ibn Khaldun – who is acknowledged as Imam in the science and philosophy of history and historicity and, moreover, is considered the initiator of the philosophy of history – writes;

“The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was born, during the year of the elephant, on

the twelfth of Rabi' al-Awwal. It was the fortieth year of Anushirvan's rule.”²

3. The prominent prophetic biographer, 'Allama Ibn Hisham (d. 213 AH) writes in his *al-Sirat al-Nabawiyya* quoting from the first prophetic biographer of the Islamic world, Imam Muhammad ibn Ishaq;

“The noble Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was born on Monday, the twelfth of Rabi' al-Awwal during the year of the elephant.”³

4. 'Allama Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Mawardi – who is from amongst the experts in the science of politics and whose book, *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya*, is even today a great reference for students of politics – writes in his book *A'lam al-Nubuwwa*;

“After fifty days of the elephant incident and after the passing away of his father, the noble Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was born on Monday, the twelfth of Rabi' al-Awwal.”⁴

These are the illustrious scholars, of the disciplines of the Qur'an and Sunna and the science of history, who have written Monday the twelfth of Rabi' al-Awwal to be the day of the *mawlid* of the Chosen One (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and they have not at all mentioned any other opinion or view. This is an indication that according to these scholars this particular opinion is correct and most authentic.

The prophetic biographer of the present era, Muhammad al-Sadiq 'Arjun – who has been the dean of the faculty of theology at Al-Azhar University, Egypt – writes in his book *Muhammad Rasulullah*;

“From numerous sources it has been established that the noble Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was born on Monday, the twelfth Rabi' al-Awwal, in the year of the elephant and during the rule of Chosroes Anushirvan. And those scholars who compare historical calendars, they have stated that this is equivalent to the twentieth of August, 570 CE.”⁵

Other than him, 'Allama Muhammad Rada – who was the principal librarian at Cairo University – in his book *Muhammad Rasulullah* writes;

“The noble Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was born at dawn on the twelfth of Rabi' al-Awwal; equivalent to the twentieth of August, 570 CE. The people of Makka visit the place of his birth on this date.”⁶

Some Other References

Concerning the *mawlid* of the Chosen One (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), 'Allama Ibn Jawzi summarises his research in the following manner;

“The birth of the noble Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) occurred on Monday, the tenth of Rabi' al-Awwal, during the year of the elephant. It has also been said that it was the second of Rabi' al-Awwal and Imam Ibn Ishaq states that the birth of Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) took place on the day of Monday, the twelfth of Rabi' al-Awwal, during the year of the elephant.”⁷

Imam al-Hafiz Abu'l-Fath Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn Sayyid al-Nas al-Shafi'i al-Andalusi in his prophetic biography *Uyun al-Athar* writes;

“Our leader and our Prophet, Muhammad, Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), was born on Monday, the twelfth of Rabi' al-Awwal, during the year of the elephant. Some have also said that his birth occurred fifty days after the incident of the elephant.”⁸

Following this passage, he continues and relates the opinions which state the second and eighth of Rabi' al-Awwal.

'Allama Ibn Kathir – who was exemplary in the sciences of tafsir, hadith and history – in his *al-Sira al-Nabawiyya* redresses research on this topic when he states;

“The noble Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was born on the day of Monday. Imam Muslim in his *Sahih* relates the hadith of Ghaylan ibn Jarir from Abu Qatada that a Companion asked, “O Messenger of Allah! What do you say concerning fasting on the day of Monday?” The noble Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) replied, “That is the day when I was born and that is the day on which revelation was revealed upon me.””

Following this, 'Allama Ibn Kathir writes that it has been narrated from Ibn Abbas that he used to say, “Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was born on a Monday, annunciation of prophethood was on a Monday, migration from Makka was on a Monday, arrival at Madina was on a Monday, the day he left this temporary world was a Monday and the day he lifted the black stone and placed it in the wall of the ka'ba was also a Monday.” Then he continued that whomsoever have said that the date of birth was Friday, the seventeenth of Rabi' al-Awwal, are completely incorrect and far from the truth.

The opinion of the majority is that it was the month of Rabi' al-Awwal. Some have said that it was the second of this month; some have said it was the eighth and some have said it was the tenth. The opinion of the eighth has been related from Ibn Hazm and al-Hafiz al-Kabir Muhammad ibn Musa

al-Khawarizmi has corrected this. Some have determined it to be the twelfth of this month. Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Abi Shayba in his *Musannaf* have both narrated this date;

“Ibn Abi Shayba in his *Musannaf* relates from ‘Affan, who relates from Sa‘id ibn Mina’, who relates from Jabir and Ibn Abbas that they said, “Allah’s Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was born during the year of the elephant, Monday, the twelfth of Rabi‘ al-Awwal. On this day, he announced prophethood, and on this day he ascended to the heavens, and on this day he migrated, and on this day he passed away.” And this is the view of the vast majority.”⁹

The first narrator of this tradition is Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shayba. Concerning him, Abu Zar‘a Razi (d. 264 AH) has stated that he has not seen any greater *hafiz* of hadith than Abu Bakr ibn Shayba. The *muhaddith* Ibn Habban states that Abu Bakr was a great *hafiz* of hadith. The second narrator is ‘Affan about whom the opinion of the *muhaddithun* is that he was an esteemed and reliable (*thiqa*) Imam and enjoyed the qualities of retentiveness (*dabt*) and firmness (*itqan*). The third narrator is Sa‘id ibn Mina’ who is also counted amongst the reliable narrators (*thiqa*). This narration, with a sound chain of transmission (*sahih al-isnad*), has been narrated by two distinguished Companions; Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah and ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas (Allah be pleased with them both).

In the presence of this elevated narration (*marfu’ riwaya*), for an historian or an expert of astronomy to reject the date of birth as being the twelfth of Rabi‘ al-Awwal is not at all worthy of acceptance.

Mawlana Sayyid ‘Abd al-Quddus Hashimi, alongside being a religious scholar, is also greatly skilled in the science of almanac and calendar. He has written a book on this discipline titled *Taqwim Tarikhi*. According to him also, the correct date of birth is the twelfth of Rabi‘ al-Awwal.

The famous scholar of the Ahl al-Hadith, Nawab Sayyid Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan, writes that the birth occurred in Makka at the time of dawn on the day of Monday and the twelfth of Rabi‘ al-Awwal during the year of the elephant. The majority

of the scholars are also of this opinion and Ibn Jawzi is in agreement with this too.¹⁰

The grand mufti of the scholars of Deoband, Mawlana Mufti Muhammad Shafi‘ in *Sirat Khatam al-Anbiya’* writes;

“In short, the year in which the attack of the people of the elephant took place, in its month of Rabi‘ al-Awwal and on its twelfth day; the real source of revolution, the pride of the children of Adam, the secret behind the protection of the arc of Nuh (Noah), the prayer of Ibrahim (Abraham), the manifestation of the prophecies of Musa (Moses) and Isa (Jesus), i.e. our renowned leader, Muhammad, Allah’s Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), was born and increasingly graced the world.”¹¹

Some prophetic biographers in the Indian subcontinent, with reference to the astronomer Mahmud Pasha, have written that the twelfth of Rabi‘ al-Awwal was not on a Monday, but rather Monday fell on the ninth of Rabi‘ al-Awwal. Therefore, the correct date would be the ninth. However, the interesting thing is that these people do not even know with certainty the original homeland of Mahmud Pasha.

‘Allama Shibli Nu‘mani and Qadi Sulayman Mansurpuri have written that Mahmud Pasha was a citizen of Egypt. Mufti Muhammad Shafi‘ wrote that he was from Makka and Mawlana Hifz al-Rahman Siyuharwi referred to him as the famous astronomer and astrologer of Constantinople.

Despite much effort and endeavour, I have not been able to find any book or document of the astronomer Mahmud Pasha. However, I have managed to find out that the original thesis of Mahmud Pasha was written in the French language and was first of all translated into the Arabic language by Ahmad Zaki Effendi by the name of *Nata’ij al-Afham*. This was subsequently translated into the Urdu language by Mawlwi Sayyid Muhyuddin Khan who was judge at the high court in Haidarabad and this was published by Nolikshur Press in 1898. However, today this translation cannot be found.

Even if the astronomer Mahmud Pasha, using the knowledge of astronomy, has done some research, nevertheless, it is not appropriate to entirely depend upon this research in order to belie the traditions narrated from the noble Companions, *tabi'un* (second generation; followers of the Companions) and other predecessors. This is due to the fact that any results from astronomy and astrology, like other scientific disciplines, are neither absolute nor conclusive.

In this regard, it is worth considering that the usage of the Islamic calendar (*hijri*) began in the time of 'Umar al-Faruq (Allah be pleased with him) and the first time it was used in the Islamic state was on Thursday, the twentieth of Jamad al-Ula, 17 AH, equivalent to the twelfth of July, 638 CE. An historical record of the time after this can be found, however, any almanac record of the time before this is not available. Moreover, before the annunciation of prophethood, there was not any official calendar in force in the Arab land. The Arabs were accustomed to changing and altering the months as they pleased, and hence, sometimes they would make thirteen and fourteen months in one year. It is mentioned in *Diya' al-Qur'an* that in a lunar year one extra intercalary month would be added to the existing twelve months. It is quite clear that before the annunciation of prophethood, such additions were made, however, we can never know in which specific year or years additions were made.¹²

Before Mahmud Pasha, some other astronomers had also attempted to determine the day of the birth through their calculations. 'Allama Qastalani writes that the people of Zaych are in agreement that the eighth of Rabi' al-Awwal was the Monday. It can be deduced from this that whosoever will use the knowledge of astronomy and mathematical calculations to determine the date, it will be different. Therefore, we must accept the sayings of the ancient prophetic biographers, *muhaddithun*, *mufasssirun*, *tabi'un* and the noble Companions (Allah be pleased with them all).

From the above discussion it is established that the Raison D'être of Creation, Muhammad, the Chosen One, Ahmad, the Selected One (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), on the twelfth of Rabi' al-Awwal, during the year of the elephant, on the day of Monday, at the time of dawn, entered this world, of all that is or has been, and graced it with his presence.

After relating these views and opinions of the respected scholars, I will present to the readers the view and opinion of Egypt's genius scholar who was outstanding in terms of knowledge and excellence, and piety and righteousness. In my view, this opinion is the decisive word and there is contentment and satisfaction in this for those searching for the truth. Imam Muhammad Abu Zahra (Allah have mercy upon him) in his prophetic biography *Khatam al-Nabiyyin* elaborates on this issue in the following manner;

"The great and vast majority of the scholars of narration (*riwaya*) are in agreement that the birth was during the year of the elephant, on the twelfth of Rabi' al-Awwal, which was equivalent to the month of August."¹³

Following this, he has also mentioned the other opinions on this issue, however, he commented on them with the following words;

"In comparison to the view of the vast majority of scholars, these other narrations are not well-known and widespread (*mashhur*). Moreover, preference (*tarjih*) in the discipline of narration (*riwaya*) does not depend upon intellect (*'aql*), rather upon transmission (*naql*)."

The *shaykh al-hadith* of the Indian subcontinent, Shaykh 'Abd al-Haqq Muhaddith Dihlawi (Allah have mercy upon him) in his renowned book *Madarij al-Nubuwwa* discusses the date of the *mawlid* and writes;

"Know with certainty that the vast majority of the people of prophetic biography and history are of the opinion that the birth of the noble Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) occurred during the year of the elephant and forty or fifty five days after the incident of the elephant. This second opinion of fifty five days is the most correct and authentic. It is well-known (*mashhur*) that it was the month of Rabi' al-Awwal and the date was the twelfth. The scholars are in agreement over this."¹⁴

After mentioning this delightful, heart-enlightening and soul-nourishing occurrence, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Haqq Muhaddith Dihlawi composed a few couplets in praise of the noble Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), or they just suddenly composed themselves through his passion. Read them and try to enlighten you hearts. He says;

How illuminated was the night of the birth of Muhammad, the Chosen One; that from Makka to Syria, the entire area shined and illuminated.

*Not merely Makka or Syria, but East to West;
every spot and area of the world shined with his light.*

*All corners of this world illuminated with his light;
and every area was fragranced with his manners and etiquettes.*

At last, he is given a position in the heavens of honour and greatness; he who becomes the dust of this blessed court, with sincerity and certainty.

*No simoom can dry up the grass and greenery;
which has been moistened and sprinkled by his much needed cloud of mercy.*

All praise is for Allah (most high) that Haqqi [the shaykh's pen-name]; can acquire all the riches of the world and religion from his treasures.

This excerpt from Diya' al-Nabi (pages 33-41 of volume 2) has been translated by Bakhtyar Haider Pirzada al-Azhari (July 2006).

¹ Imam Ibn Jarir Tabari, *Tarikh Tabari*, volume 2, page 125.

² ‘Allama Ibn Khaldun, *Tarikh Ibn Khaldun*, volume 2, page 710.

³ ‘Allama Ibn Hisham, *Sirat Ibn Hisham*, volume 1, page 171.

⁴ ‘Allama Abu'l-Hasan ‘Ali ibn Muhammad al-Mawardi, *A'lam al-Nubuwwa*, page 192.

⁵ Muhammad al-Sadiq ‘Arjun, *Muhammad Rasulullah*, volume 1, page 102.

⁶ ‘Allama Muhammad Rada, *Muhammad Rasulullah*, volume 2, page 19.

⁷ ‘Allama Ibn Jawzi, *al-Wafa*, page 90.

⁸ Imam Abu'l-Fath Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn Sayyid al-Nas al-Shafi'i al-Andalusi, *Uyun al-Athar*, volume 1, page 26.

⁹ ‘Allama Ibn Kathir, *Sirat Ibn Kathir*, volume 1, page 199.

¹⁰ Nawab Sayyid Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan, *al-Shamama al-Anbariyya Mawlid Khayr al-Bariyya*, page 7.

¹¹ Mawlana Mufti Muhammad Shafi', *Sirat Khatam al-Anbiya*, page 18.

¹² Diya' al-Ummat, Justice Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah al-Azhari (ra), *Diya' al-Qur'an*, volume 1, page 202, note 60.

¹³ Imam Muhammad Abu Zahra, *Khatam al-Nabiyyin*, volume 1, page 115.

¹⁴ Shaykh ‘Abd al-Haqq Muhaddith Dihlawi, *Madarij al-Nubuwwa*, volume 2, page 15.